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What Are Birds Worth

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VENI VIDI PICCOLOMINI

I dreamt of rain: puffballs coming up
along a log, a long-haired dog
limping away from a mystery. Aeneas

Piccolomini, I picked you out
of pine needles and the 15th century;
you wondered how a pear-bush got in
among the evergreen, why you came

to Scotland in the first place.
What sounds my pipes made
when you danced around the pears
that were ripe and in the shape of geese.

When they fell off from the fury
of your ecstasy, they saw a dog wander
back to its sheep, and flew away.

WHAT ARE BIRDS WORTH

for L.D.

Be a sea gull. Drop upon the beach.
Be a legal tablet or a peach come to rest
upon the nose or feet
of our local Hammurabies.

Birdies, beat the plums from our formal orchards,
sing through the membrane
of what holds us back: what's behind

the banister? A barrister? A courtly blister
itching for a pin? Will it open? O,
when the saps from the phloem and the xylem
and the birds (what words birds are)
drop upon the beach.